

The Man With the Hoe.

In another column will be found Edwin Markham's famous poem, entitled "The Man With the Hoe." Below will be found Mr. Bryan's comment thereon, written for the New York Journal:

It is not strange that Edwin Markham's poem entitled "The Man With the Hoe" created a profound sensation. It is a sermon addressed to the heart, and its lesson is not limited to any nation, race or clime. It voices humanity's protest against inhuman greed. There is a majestic sweep to the argument, and some of the lines pierce like arrows:

Is this the Thing the Lord God made and gave
To have dominion over sea and land;
To trace the stars and search the heavens for
power;
To feel the passion of Eternity?

Through this dread shape the suffering ages
look;

Time's tragedy is in that aching stoop;
Through this dread shape humanity betrayed,
Plundered, profaned and disinherited,
Cries protest to the Judges of the World.

Is this the handiwork you give to God?

How feeble, in comparison, have been the answers to it!

The poem deals with the condition, the cause, the remedy and the warning.

The condition is set forth in the lines:

Down all the stretch of Hell to its last gulf
There is no shape more terrible than this—
More tongued with censure of the world's blind
greed—
More filled with signs and portents for the soul—
More fraught with menace to the universe.

It is not an answer to the indictment to say that the poet selects his type not from the middle classes, but from the lowest level. He is dealing with the mill which takes in, as raw material, the man made in the image of his Creator and, if it is allowed to complete its work, turns out as the finished product—

A thing that grieves not and that never hopes.

Sometimes it is a tyrant who oppresses for the benefit of himself, his family and the warriors upon whom he relies to enforce his authority; sometimes it is an aristocracy which gathers in the fruits of power and throws upon the masses the burdens of government; sometimes it is a plutocracy which openly exalts money and debases flesh and blood; but everywhere it is the same brutal spirit which ignores the brotherhood of man and violates the commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

The extremes of society are being driven further and further apart. Wealth is being concentrated in the hands of a few, and tenancy is on the increase. At one end of the scale luxury and idleness breed effeminacy; at the other end of the scale want and destitution breed desperation.

Civilization cannot be measured by the refinements and the enjoyments of the rich; the toilers who produce the nation's wealth in time of peace and constitute the nation's strength in time of war must participate in every forward movement of the race. In fact, they are so important a factor that the real advancement of the race is measured by their advancement. Improved machinery and inventive genius have multiplied the productive power of the individual, but the producers have not received their share of the increase. The capitalistic class and the speculating class have enjoyed, and are enjoying, too large a part of the proceeds of labor.

What is the cause?

Who made him dead to rapture and despair?

The literary sycophants who strew rhetorical

flowers in the pathway of the successful, without inquiring into the methods employed for securing success, complacently throw the responsibility for failure in life upon God, or Nature, or upon the man himself. Is it the fault of God or of Nature that children are driven into factories at so early an age that their bodies are stunted, their minds dwarfed and the strength and usefulness of future generations lessened? Is God or Nature responsible for the laws which permit this impairment of the man-power and woman-power of the nation? The labor organizations have done much to mitigate the evils of child labor and to shorten the hours of adult labor, but what encouragement have they received from those who favor government by injunction, oppose arbitration and denounce as disturbers of the peace all who criticize existing conditions?

Is it the fault of God or of Nature that our tax laws are so made and our tax systems so administered that the poor man pays more than his share of the taxes and the rich man less than his share?

Is God or Nature to blame for the substitusystem which raises the purchasing power of the dollar in the hands of the money changer, while it increases the burden of debt to the man who owes and decreases the value of property in the hands of the wealth producers?

Is God or Nature responsible for a paper money trust that makes the people at large the victims of private individuals entrusted with the control of the volume of currency?

Is God or Nature responsible for private monopolies which corner the markets, extort from the people and disburse the proceeds among the holders of watered stock?

Is God or Nature to blame for the substitution of force for reason and might for right in government? Is God or Nature responsible for the nation's entrance upon a career of conquest, entailing upon the many the burden and menace of militarism and conferring upon the few the benefits of exploitation?

The United States supreme court has coined the phrase, "larceny by law," and compared with ordinary stealing this form of theft may be called grand larceny; and yet wholesale wrong-doing is never taken into account by those who assume that all who are poor deserve their poverty, and that all who are rich earn their riches. If one employs another to commit robbery he is as guilty as if he commits the act himself; does it change the moral character of the act because the injury is done indirectly instead of directly? Does it change the moral character of the act because the injury is done through legislation which he has secured or in the absence of some righteous law the passage of which he has prevented.

The accumulation of wealth by honest means is to be encouraged, but the line must be drawn between honest wealth—the reward of brain service or muscle service rendered—and predatory wealth which defies the law or turns government itself into a machine for the plunder of the public.

The indolent cannot expect plenty under any just form of government, neither can the vicious expect happiness, but under bad laws those who work the hardest may enjoy the least, and those who labor least may have the most.

But the remedy:

How will you ever straighten up this shape,
Touch it again with immortality?

Give justice to every creature—justice in the methods of government, justice in the distribution of the burdens of government, justice in the making of the laws, justice in the interpretation of the laws, justice in the execution of the laws. Justice first and charity afterwards.

Justice will not eliminate distress entirely, but it will greatly reduce the number of those who come within the description of the poet. There will still be some poor, some destitute, some des-

perate. Generations of vice will transmit tendencies toward vice, which must be reformed.

Some will be victims of unavoidable misfortunes—they will need the aid of the more fortunate. The orphan will need a foster-parent, the widow will need a friend, the aged without relatives will need a benefactor. The weak must be encouraged by the strong; those who fall must be lifted up.

Love is the antithesis of greed; it will inspire both justice and mercy. Love and love alone can regulate the relations between man and man and plant a hope in the breast of every child born into the world.

When every man-made wrong is remedied there will still be suffering enough to enable every person to prove his love toward God by manifesting his compassion toward his fellows.

But the poet presents also a warning:

How will the future reckon with this man,
How answer his brute question in that hour
When whirlwinds of rebellion shake the world?
How will it be with kingdoms and with kings—
With those who shaped him to the thing he is—
When this dumb terror shall reply to God
After the silence of the centuries?

In monarchies revolution is the only weapon of the oppressed; under our form of government wrongs are righted by the ballot; but even here the longer a necessary reform is delayed the more disturbance its accomplishment causes.

Victor Hugo has described the mob as "the human race in misery." We cannot afford to make people miserable. Life is secure and property rights are respected in proportion as the people find life worth living. Happy will be the lot of all when each member of society makes to society a just and adequate return for that which he receives from society. Happy will be the lot of all when each member of society recognizes the indissoluble tie that binds together the highest and the lowest, the strongest and the weakest, the richest and the poorest—when each member of society aids according to his ability to give back to the poet's subject:

* * * the upward looking and the light;
Rebuild in it the music and the dream;
Make right the immemorial infamies,
Perfidious wrongs, immedicable woes.

A Vivid Object Lesson.

A Los Angeles dispatch to the New York World, one day last month, told the story of a train load of Porto Ricans who were on their way to Hawaii. The World refers to this as "a vivid object lesson in what is happening in Porto Rico." Speaking of these emigrants, the World says:

"They sailed on Saturday in the Zealandia, nicknamed the 'Slave Ship.' Twelve of the party of 900 had died since they left San Juan. The death certificates give the causes as 'pernicious anaemia,' which is not the medical equivalent for 'benevolent assimilation,' but for 'lack of blood and want of nutriment.' Their railway journey had been in cars fouler than cattle cars and more crowded. Their quarters on the Zealandia are squalid and inhumanly cramped.

As the ship was leaving, the mother of one of the youths who had just died 'begged to be allowed to kiss her dead child's face once more, but this was denied to her.' And so the 'Slave Ship' with the 'free flag of the republic' floating at its masthead, dropped down to sea with the wails of this mother borne back upon the breeze.

"A disagreeable skeleton at the imperialist feast, Hustle it away. And let the band play some lively patriotic air—and play it loudly."